

A

No 20.

S E R M O N

Preach'd before

The Right Honourable the
Lord-Mayor and Aldermen
Of the City of *London*,

At the Cathedral Church of St. Paul,

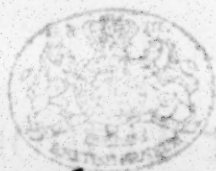
On *Wednesday* the 4th of *April*, 1705.

A Day appointed for a solemn Fast, for imploring the Continuance of a Blessing from Almighty God upon Her Majesty and Her Allies, engaged in the present War: And for Restoring and Perpetuating Peace, Safety, and Prosperity to Her Majesty and Her Kingdoms, and the Nations and States in Alliance with Her; and disappointing the Boundless Ambition of *France*.

By Josiah Woodward D. D. Minister of Poplar.

L O N D O N,

Printed by J. Downing for W. Hawes at the Golden-Buck
over-against St. Dunstan's Church in Fleet-street. 1705.



Buckingham Mayor.

THIS Court doth desire the Reverend Dr. *Woodward* to Print his Sermon preached at the Cathedral Church of *St. Paul*, before the Right Honourable the Lord-Mayor, Aldermen, and Livery-Men of the several Companies of this City, on *Wednesday* the 4th Instant, being a General and Publick Fast appointed by Her Most Sacred Majesty, for imploring the Blessing and Assistance of Almighty God on the Arms of Her Majesty and Her Allies and their Forces by Sea and Land, &c.

Asbburst.

To the Right Honourable
Sir Owen Buckingham, Kt.
Lord-Mayor of the City of *London*;
And to the
Court of ALDERMEN.

I *Am obliged on many Accounts, My Lord, to comply with the Order hereunto affixed, for the Publishing of this Sermon; more especially as it seems to imply an Engagement of the Authority of this August City, in Favour of the Subject of it : namely, in the Defence and Advancement of our most Holy Religion, which the following Sermon asserts to be the only way to Present and Future Happiness. A Truth as clear as the Sun in the Firmament, yet sadly over-born in common Practice.*

We see with heavy Hearts, my Lord, the dismal Decay of Devotion in Families; and that with many Persons it is not suffered so much as to appear with any just Reverence at the Table, or in common Discourse. And while this great Nursery of Religion has decayed, it has been outraged in the Streets, and on the Stage. And we cannot say as yet, that the Remedies applied to either of these have had their full Effect.

If

The Dedication.

If Religion then, which is the only Channel thro' which the Mercies of God descend to Men, has so few hearty Friends with us, and so many inveterate Enemies; How can it long subsist among us? And how can we subsist without it?

It is too evident, my Lord, that Christendom has long been a Scene of Impiety, and now we behold it a Field of Blood. O May England learn Righteousness by God's Judgments abroad, which testify to us in Capital Letters written in Blood, That except we repent, we shall also likewise perish.

Permit me therefore, my Lord, to say; That it is time for Magistrates and Ministers, and all that wish well to our Church and State, to set themselves to remove the Causes of God's Wrath, and to follow the things which make for our Peace: At once lifting up their Hands against all Impiety, and their Cry to Heaven for Mercy.

For as this Nation sins against greater Light and Mercies than others, our Punishment will justly be the most dreadful of all, except we truly repent and reform in due time; that is, without Delay, and without Dissimulation: Which that we may all do, and so be a happy People, is the earnest Prayer of,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

Very respectful

Humble Servant

JOSIAH WOODWARD.

2 Chron. XV. Ver. ii.

Hear ye me, Aſa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him; and if ye ſeek Him, He will be found of you; but if ye forſake Him, He will forſake you.

THESE are the Words of the Prophet *Azariah* to *Aſa* King of *Judah*, a Prince who had been very zealous in reclaiming his People from Idolatry and Impiety. *He had taken away the Altars of the ſtrange Gods, and the High-Places, and brake down the Images, and cut down the Groves: And he commanded Judah to ſeek the Lord God of their Fathers, and to do the Law and the Commandment: as we read in the foregoing Chapter. And being thus engaged in God's Service, God was with him, and gave him a very glorious Victory over a vaſt Army of the Ethiopians and Lubims, wherein no leſs than a thouſand thouſand Men were utterly overthrown. And to encourage the King in the good Work he had begun, the Prophet assures him from God, that He and his People would receive much greater Blessings, if they con-*

Chap. 14. ver.
3, 4.

tinued stedfast in their Zeal for God's Glory. *The Lord is with you*, says he, *while ye be with Him*. God will go forth with your Armies, and will scatter your Enemies before your Faces; and will prosper you in whatever ye set your Hands unto. But withal, you must remember the dismal Consequence of the contrary Behaviour towards God; *for if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you*: and then all your Blessings will be revers'd: there will be a Blast on your Publick Affairs and on your Private Concerns: *There will be no Peace to him that goes out, nor to him that comes in*. Such as adventure abroad will meet with Enemies, and they that tarry at home will have Crosses and Vexations, as the just Rebukes of your Rebellion against the Lord; *For if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you*.

er. 5.

These important Words are well prefaced with a Command of Attention to all Persons whatsoever, from the Prince that sitteth on the Throne to the Servant that grindeth at the Mill. *Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah, and Benjamin, The Lord is with you, whilst ye be with Him*, and no longer. 'Tis fit that every one that has Ears to hear should be made sensible of this Truth, because it infinitely concerns every one. The Favour of God is the greatest Interest of Man; and the Advancement of Religion the most essen-

tial part of humane Policy ; to which every one is concerned to lay his Hand. And lest either the Prince or the People should be discouraged by the Difficulty or Danger of driving Men from their dear Vices, the Prophet adds, Verse 7th. *Be strong therefore, and let not your Hands be weak: for your Work shall be rewarded.* As if he had said ; Ye see what a great Victory the God of Armies has given you, for that He hath seen some things in you agreeable to his holy Will : Be ye therefore couragious in the Cause of your God. Root out utterly those Abominations upon which ye have begun to fall. Lay aside all such carnal Considerations as are apt to amuze and discourage you ; for the Omnipotent God is with you whilst you engage and act for his Glory ; and He will support you whilst ye remain faithful to Him. But if ye withdraw your Hands from God's Work, ye will certainly weaken your selves in every other Enterprize ; which will be unsuccessful because unblest : *For if ye forsake God, He will forsake you.*

A very brief Reflection will shew us how agreeable this whole Matter is to our present Circumstances and the Business of this Day. Our most Renowned and Excellent Queen, whom God long preserve, has done many worthy things for the Glory of God and the Good of Her People.

And it has pleased God to stir up a vigorous Concern for his Glory in the Hearts of some of Her People. And agreeably to the Truth of the Text, God has bless'd Her Majesty's Forces with Success in various Instances, and with a late stupendious Victory that can scarcely be parallel'd in many Ages past. And this in the most important Juncture that can be imagined. The Work then that yet remains upon Hand is a farther Suppression of those things whereby God is dishonoured among us. A more effectual stopping of the Mouth of *Atheism* and *Blasphemy*; and a more vigorous opposing of those that visibly fight against God by their horrid *Impieties* and daring *Vices*.

In this Application, my Text is my Warrant: For *God will be with us no longer than we are with Him*: And if *we forsake Him, He will forsake us*. So that the great and awful Truth, which I have to lay before you, and which I beseech the Spirit of God to impress on your Hearts, is this.

Obf. *That the Ways of our Holy Religion are the only sure Paths to present Prosperity and everlasting Glory. The Lord is with you or against you, says the Prophet, as your Hearts and Lives are for or against Him. The Works of your Hands are the surest Palmistry to tell you what Good or Evil will*

Will befall you. If your Weapons are formed against God they cannot prosper: Nor will your Sins bring you Peace at the last, till the Enemy of all Goodness can dethrone Almighty God, and become the Governour of the World. Whilst the holy and righteous God reigns, *Righteousness will advance and establish a Nation, and Sin will be the Shame and the Bane of any People*: And this is the Matter of our Mourning and Humiliation before God this Day. We have too widely departed from God, and too obstinately fought against Him. There seems to be a very general Declension of *Piety and Virtue* in all Ranks and Degrees of Men among us. Men of Figure and Character are poisoned with the pestilent Notions of *Atheism and Heathenism*, colour'd over with the more plausible Names of *Deism and Socinianism*. And this, in favour to those Vices which are spread very far by their Examples. Infomuch that were it not for the Promise in the Text, the few that are truly virtuous and pious would be utterly incompetent to stem the rapid Tyde that runs against them. And what is worst of all, we seem in a great measure, to have sinned away the *Sanctifying Power* of the Gospel, which should renew us; as in the last Days of the *Jewish State*. So that we are reduced to Circumstances of *Honor* and *Perplexity*; For if the *Foundations be destroyed,*

stroyed, What can the Righteous do? Yet even here, the Text brings us this Relief; *That God will be found of us if we seek Him.* And this is the solemn Work of this mournful Day; which I pray God encline every one of us to observe in a penitent and contrite Frame of Soul. May the whole Nation lay it self in deep Humiliation before God this Day in the sense of the National Guilt, and renounce every thing that is offensive to God, as the direct Way to National Mercies. That so the Lord of Hosts may go forth with our *Armies* and *Fleets*, and may overturn that powerful *Tyranny* and *Idolatry* which has made such Havock in the World.

Ah! Where is the just Fear or Love of God, or indeed the due Sense of God's Government of the World; If the Devotion of one single Day is thought too much to be dedicated to God, in order to implore his Blessing on those Publick Undertakings, upon the Success of which, the Continuance of our dearest Comforts in this Life, and of the best Means of attaining Happiness in the Life to come, does very much depend: And this both with respect to our selves and our Posterity.

Wherefore, let me beseech and exhort you, in the Name and Fear of the *Great and Terrible God*, our *Creator* and *Judge*, that ye make your ear-
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nest Supplications this Day in true Contrition of Soul, in the Behalf of a divided and degenerate Nation, and that ye so live for the future, that the devout Frame of your whole Life may testify the Sincerity of your Humiliation this Day; serving the Lord with all Humility of Mind, Fervency of Spirit, and Integrity of Heart: always remembring and applying the awakening Words of the Text. *That God will be for us, or against us, as we are for, or against Him.*

In the farther Consideration of which Truth, it will be requisite that we inquire more particularly into these Three things.

- I. *When and wherein we may be said to be with God? By which we shall also see when we are against Him.*
- II. *How and in what manner God is with or against any Person or People?*
- III. *The necessary Connection of both these; that is, of God's being with, or against such as are for, or against Him. The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him; And if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; But if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you. Let us then consider,*

I. When

I. *When and wherein we may be said to be with God?*

To be with God in the Sense of the Text, is, I conceive, all one as to be steadfast in God's Covenant, in which we absolutely devote our selves to God through Jesus Christ as one of His People. And whereas there is by Divine Permission a continual Strife betwixt the Kingdoms of *Light* and *Darkness*; a faithful Christian must be, as I may so say, on God's Side in all such Contests. And this is that which makes the Warfare of a Christian, who wrestles not with *Flesh* and *Blood* only, but with the *Principalities* and *Powers of Darkness*, against which he could not be able to bear up, but thro' the Succours of *Divine Assistance* promised in the Text. So that in this Case, if we are with God, we shall evidence it in these Three Particulars.

1. We shall carefully regard whatever God is pleased to command us.

2. We shall be sensibly grieved at every thing whereby God is dishonoured.

3. We shall industriously seek to administer to the Glory of God according to the measure of our Talents and Opportunities, throughout our whole Life.

All these are but a just Observance of our *Baptismal Vows*, in which we list our selves under the

the Banner of Christ, and promise to serve Him as faithful Servants and Soldiers all the Days of our Life. And agreeably to this, our Lord Jesus Christ is called the *Captain of our Salvation*, Heb. 2. 10. And if we are with Him as Soldiers under a General, the forementioned Particulars will take place: that is,

1st, We shall carefully regard whatever God is pleased to command us. The Orders of a General to his Soldiers must not be disputed or delay'd. Yea, the brave Soldier counts himself particularly honoured by the Difficulty and Danger of the Post that is assigned him: And so will every sincere Christian, to whom Martyrdom it self is a most inestimable Favour. And whatever our Temptations are, if we dare disobey God knowingly and deliberately, for the Fear or Desire of any worldly thing, we cannot but see that we want Christian Integrity, and that we have no Right to the Noble Comforts that flow from it. *This is our rejoicing* (says St. Paul (2 Cor. 1. 12.) *the Testimony of our Conscience, that in all Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with fleshly Wisdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our Conversation in the World.* This is the Testimony that we must all labour to attain; for he that walks with God, as in the Text, will endeavour to walk in all the

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Commandments of God blamelesly thro' Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and Communion with the Holy Spirit.

2d. If we are truly with God, we shall be sensibly touch'd whenever we see God dishonoured. An upright Heart cannot bear the Blasphemies and Outrages of licentious Men against God and holy Things: it pierces him deeply, and he cannot but resent, rebuke, and oppose it by all advisable Means. We see with what Vehemency the Royal Psalmist expresses his Faithfulness to God in this Point, *Psalm. 139. 21, 22. Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? And am not I griev'd with those that rise up against Thee? I hate them with perfect Hatred, I count them mine Enemies.* This is a necessary Effect of sincere Love. You cannot endure to hear a rude Person revile any of your dear Relations, or a Friend that is as your own Soul. Will you not reply with Quickness and Warmth in such a Case, and seek Redress from our Laws, if the Matter be not speedily taken up? And if so, where is our Duty to our most gracious God, who is our Father and Friend in a more absolute Sense than any Person upon Earth can be, if we shew no visible Resentment when his holy Name is dishonoured, and his Sovereign Authority trampled under Foot. May he not well
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expostulate on such Occasions, and say, as (*Mat. 1. 6.*) *If I am a Father, Where is my Honour? If I am a Master, Where is my Fear?* 'Tis of the Essence of Religion to fear and honour God; so that except our Prayers and Profession of Religion be a plain and palpable Mockery, we must deport our selves with a Carriage something like it in our Lives and Conversations. And therefore, on what side are we, if we shew no Appearance of Disgust when we hear prophane Swearing and Cursing; and are easie and quiet in seeing and hearing those Things which grieved the Soul of righteous Lot from Day to Day. This can no more consist with Faithfulness to God, than Light with Darkness, or Hatred with Friendship. Yea, to be unconcerned in such a Case is to desert our Master, who has already declared, (*Mat. 12. 30.*) *That he that is not for Him, is against Him; and that he that gathereth not with Him, scattereth abroad.*

3d. If we are on God's Side we shall endeavour to administer to the Glory of God upon all Occasions, according to the Measure of our Talents: And as a good Soldier gladly catches at an Opportunity of shewing his Courage and Faithfulness in the Cause of his Prince, so will the Christian Soldier in his Zeal for God and his Kingdom. For a Christian is a Person

consecrated to God, and all his Interests and Powers are devoted to his Service: And he will put out his utmost Endeavours to exalt the Glory of God, whom he sincerely loves with all his Heart, and serves with all his Might, and will think that part of his Time and Estate the best laid out in which he did the greatest Service to his Blessed Creator and Redeemer.

These Particulars serve to give some Illustration to that Phrase of the Text, *The being with God*, or on God's Side, namely, when we are truly and affectionately devoted to God, and effectually engaged in his Service with a just Zeal and Concern for his Glory.

And such a Person or People cannot but be in a happy Case: For God will be with them in a most gracious and comfortable manner; which leads me to the Second Thing proposed to be inquired into, namely,

II. *How and in what Respects God will vouchsafe to be with such as are with Him, according to his Promise in the Text.*

And to answer this in few Words: God will be with such a Person or People as their Covenant-Ally. He will be with them, and act for them. He will be a Father to them in all their Wants; and their Helper in all Distress. He will lighten their Darkness, scatter their Dangers, quiet

quiet their Fears, and support their Frailty. In short, He will be a *GOD* to them, and that is more than all the Volumes of the best Pen-Men or the Tongues of the highest Angels can express. For in this one Article of God's most gracious Covenant He fully makes over all the Infinite Perfections of his *GODHEAD* for the Comfort of his Faithful People, and is pleased to seal and confirm it in the Blood of his Beloved Son. And tho' the mysterious Workings of Divine Providence are usually too intricate to be traced out by our short-sighted Reason; yet it is always true, that the final Welfare of God's Church is the principal Intendment of his Providence. And by what we our selves have seen of God's marvellous Deliverances in times of imminent Danger; and by what we read of the surprizing Ways of God's providing for his People in the Instances of *Joseph, Moses, Mordecai*, and many others; we shall have abundant Reason to conclude, That we may quietly repose our selves on the sure Promises of God in the lowest outward Condition, if we know the Integrity of our Hearts with God. For, however it fares with others, *it shall be well with them that fear God*, Eccl. 8. 12. The exalted *Jesus*, who is Lord of all, esteems such as his Mother, and Sister, and Brother; yea, as the
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Member of his own Body, and will resent all their Injuries as his own.

And as to the Concerns of a Nation, which fall most properly under our Consideration this Day. If God be honoured in the Frame and Execution of the Laws of a Nation, in the making of their Alliances and Wars; and in short, in their political Capacity. They may then be assured that God will direct their National Councils, and prosper their Publick Affairs, in such Seasons and to such Degrees as to infinite Wisdom it seems best. So that as the Psalmist says; There shall be no Decay, *no leading into Captivity, no complaining in the Streets.* But rather the Voice of Mirth, the Shouts of Victory, and the Joys of Harvest. God will divide and dispirit their Enemies, and such as come out against them one way shall flee seven ways before them. So that they shall be greatly honoured and esteemed in the World. All this, as far as it may consist with their spiritual Welfare, and with God's Glory in the whole Scheme of his Government of the World.

These are some of the Blessings of God to an obedient People: But the contrary Behaviour towards God will have contrary Effects. For the Text likewise assures us, that *if we forsake Him, He will forsake us.* If we slight the Favour of God,
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and despise his glorious Gospel ; If we grieve his good Spirit, and trample on his Laws ; He will at length remove our Candlestick, and pluck up the Fence of his Providence ; and let in the wild Boar to lay waste and root up such a fruitless part of his Vineyard ; as we have seen it done upon many others, who have had the Name, but not the Purity of Reformed Churches. Can we think our selves a more Favorite People than the People of *Israel* once were, who were delivered, fed, and supported by Miracles for a long time : And yet they were at last by their Sins brought down to a most astonishing Desolation. 'Tis true, God suffered their corrupt Manners a great while, as he has ours ; And He expostulated with them very often in the most compassionate Terms by his Servants and Prophets, saying, *How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim ? How shall I make thee as Admah and Zebion*, and other Cities which I have destroyed ? But at last their ripened Sins pulled down the long Arrears of deferred Vengeance. And then *Jerusalem*, where God had long placed his *Mercy-Seat*, and the *Ark of his Covenant*, and where the *Shechinahs* of his Glory had so often appeared, became the most dismal Scene of Horror and Misery that we any where read of. What Heart can without bleeding, consider their wretched Case ; when those vast Numbers of
People

People that were shut up in *Jerusalem* at that time, (it being the time of their Passover) were at once besieged by the *Roman Army*, pined by Famine, consumed by various Diseases, and withal so desperately embittered against one another, that they wasted their own Strength by innumerable Murders committed upon their Brethren.

It is much to be wish'd that all prophane Persons and Fomenters of Divisions among us, would read *Josephus* his Account of the Desolations of *Judea*, which that Author affirms that their Prophaneness and Discord brought upon them: And that they would withal consider, that the same Causes tend to the same Ruine in other Cities and Countries, as they did in *Jerusalem* and *Judea*: So that we must either part with our Divisions and Debaucheries, or the God of Peace and Purity will forsake us. If our Hearts depart from the proper Exercises of Faith, Charity and Purity, they depart from God, and then God will depart from us, as to the Exercise of his Pity, Succour, and Mercy toward us. Or in short, *His Soul will depart from us*, as He threatens (*Jer. 6. 8.*) that is, He will have no Delight in us, nor Pity for us; And then we are undone.

These things are so terrible to every rational Mind, that we cannot well conceive how any one can ward off the convictive Power of them;

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except it be by obstinate Unbelief, having some secret Hopes that there is not an absolute Certainty of the Truth of this, and that they may indulge their Lusts and Passions, and yet enjoy the Mercies of God too. It is therefore requisite that we now consider the last Thing proposed to be spoken to, namely,

III. *The necessary Connection of the things denounced in the Text, that is, That God will assuredly be with, or against a Person or People, as they are for, or against Him.* And this is indeed the sum of God's Covenant with Man, and the whole Scope of the Law and the Gospel! But, alas! to our great Shame it must be noted, That we have some among us that believe neither *Moses*, nor the *Prophets*, nor the *Lord Jesus Christ*, or his *Apostles*. But here the self-evident Truth of my Text is piercing enough to make the most self-*ascribing Deist* to tremble, if he has not extinguished that natural Light which he idolizes. For, if God be Holy, Wise, and Just, as all sober Reasoning must allow; he will then resent and avenge Sin after the very same manner that his *Holy Oracles* have declared the whole Matter. And indeed the Thing bears its own Proof, seeing that the Person that departs from God, cannot have Him at hand to help him in his Distress; And he that fights against God cannot in

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reason expect to be treated otherwise then as God's Enemy: And here, as the Guilt is Infinite, so will the Punishment be.

But some will perhaps object, That the Prosperity of many Nations in their most heighten'd Sins, seems to contradict all that has been said on this Point: As in the Instances of Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar of old, and in the Cases of some modern Princes who seem, to have thrived by their Perjuries, Robberies, and Lawless Methods of managing their Publick Affairs.

To this it must be said, That where God is pleased to make one Nation a Scourge to others, that Nation must prevail over others till it has done God's Work: But this no more deserves to be called Prosperity, than that Malefactor is to be accounted a happy Man, who is appointed to execute the rest of the Criminals that are under Condemnation, and then must undergo the same Execution himself. For in the Cases beforementioned, when those *Babylonian* Princes had executed God's Wrath upon other Nations, then their own Reckoning began, and other Nations served themselves upon them. Then *Nebuchadnezzar* is doomed to graze among the Beasts of the Field, and *Sennacherib* dies by the Swords of his own Sons. And other licentious Princes that are notorious for Perjuries and Violence, do seldom

dom: go out of the World without their Mark set upon them by Divine Justice.

But others object farther, That tho' this was very evident in the *Jewish Dispensation* when outward Enjoyments made a great part of their Promises; It is not, they think, so certain in the spiritual Dispensations of the *Gospel*.

But it may be replied; That as the *Jewish Dispensation* was not wholly destitute of spiritual Promises and Threatnings; so also the *Gospel* is not without those that are temporal. God is as great an Enemy to Sinners now as ever, and his Honour as much concerned in the Regulation of the Kingdoms of the World. And be it remembered, that as the State of the *Gospel* began in the Destruction of the *Jewish Nation*, for their Sins, so will it end in the Destruction of the World, on the same account.

Seeing then that the Truth of my Text cannot be weakened by the feeble Attacks of humane Imaginations, and that the Unbelief of Men does not obscure the Righteousness of God: Let us now make a serious Application of all that has been said to our selves. And here,

1. This demonstratively shews us the vain Dreams of such as think of publick Prosperity in the Height of publick Sin. Can such as fight against God, come off with Victory and Tri-

umph? Is there any Peace to the Wicked? And is their Joy firm and stable? This cannot be. The Honour and Truth of God is greatly concerned in visiting and appearing against the Sins of a Nation; and therefore the Triumphs of *Atheism* and *Impiety* shall be but short.

There is therefore an absolute Necessity of casting from us whatsoever is offensive in God's Sight, if we desire that God should be with us. A general Reformation of our Lives is at this Day as necessary as the dressing of our Wounds would be, if we were mortally wounded. To delay the necessary Remedies a little longer, may be of fatal Consequence; For, alas! the whole Head is sick, and the whole Heart is faint.

Pity, O pity your selves and your Posterity, ye that have any Bowels. Be speedy in preventing the calamitous Consequences of publick Sin, that we be not ruined by our Iniquity. And here considering in whose Name and Cause I speak, I must be allowed to speak with great Concern, tho' at the same time with Awe and Respect to the *Worshipful Magistrates* of this great City.

This Matter, Gentlemen, appertains to You in a principal and peculiar Manner. You have, under *Her Majesty*, the Government of one of the most desirable Cities in the World; and it would be the greatest Pity to see it again laid

in Ashes by Vengeance from above, or made a Prey to Enemies, or buried by an Earthquake. Yea, it would be very grievous to see it only deprived of its famous Commerce, and Wealth, and Plenty. And worst of all, to see it despoiled of the glorious Gospel, and of its abundant spiritual Privileges, and given up to the Principles and Works of Darkness.

Now something of this calamitous Nature will befall it, if Atheism and Infidelity, Blasphemy and Perjury, Whoredom and Drunkenness, Swearing and Cursing, Sabbath-breaking and Blood-shed, and such other crying Impieties and Immoralities abound in it unpunished. For that most righteous God who has visited other Nations for these things, will not over-look them in us.

But yet, if our Sins are not too far advanced, (as in the desperate State of things in the Reign of *Josiah* King of *Judah*) the Remedy, *Gentlemen*, is yet very much in your own Hands. And if Ye will faithfully punish Vice and encourage Piety in this City, You may prevent God's taking the Matter into his Hands. When *Phinehas* stood up and executed Judgment, the Plague was stay'd.

And thus doing, Ye will become the noble Patriots of the Nation. For You are seated

as a City upon a Hill: And what You do will soon be spread abroad, and will in probability be very much imitated by the inferior Parts of the Nation. And what a Comfort will it be to any Man's Breast at all times, but especially in Sicknes, and in the Approaches of Death, to consider, that he hath been instrumental in the preventing of *Thousands*, or perhaps *Millions* of Blasphemies and Impieties; whereby the holy Name of God would have been dishonoured; and to consider withal, that God has been graciously pleased to promise, That *He will honour those that honour Him*, (1 Sam. 2. 30.) And we know that one Title of his Word shall not fall to the Ground unaccomplished.

The generous Assistance that has been given to this Divine Work by several *Worthy Magistrates* of this City, must here be mentioned with just Honour, and will be so in After-Ages, which may, we hope, reap the Benefits of this Your Noble Zeal for God, and Concern for the Good of Your Posterity. And may the same excellent Principles excite all private Persons to be diligent in opposing Sin in their Sphere, and in applying themselves to the Magistrate in order to bring it to condign Shame and Punishment, which leads me to a second Inference.

II. We see by what has been said, what Persons are the most useful and honourable Members of the Publick-Body, even such as faithfully serve God and live in Charity with Men. Who do all they can to take away the Reproach of Israel, the Debaucheries and Divisions thereof; and who follow Peace with all Men, and Holiness, without which no Man shall see the Lord, (Heb. 12. 14.) The Wisdom that is from Above, is first Pure, and then Peaceable: but Sensuality and bitter Wrath are from the Flesh and the Devil. And as such as act by the noble Principles of Piety and Charity do in a manner beat up the Pillars of the Land: so such as are of a contrary Temper, are every Day striking at the very Roots of our Peace and Prosperity.

Lastly, From what has been said, we may in some measure perceive the safe or dangerous State of our Nation: namely, by our general acting for, or against God.

And here, I fear, the Oracle of God in the Text will declare us to be in a very dangerous Condition, and open a very dismal Prospect to us. For, alas! that deplorable Neglect and Contempt of Religion which is so common and notorious cannot but bode us very ill: especially the publick and applauded Outrages of the Stage against sacred Things, as they have lately been laid o-

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pen to the World. And if after such a clear View of the Corruptions of the Play-House, it can yet attain a full and crowded Audience; What can be said of it, but that Christians are too generally fall'n from the Honour, Virtue, and Purity of their primitive Character, which gives but a Melancholy Prospect of things, since it was a very ancient Remark, That God will not go with such as adventure upon the Devil's Ground.

And if we look farther into the Manners of Men, and compare them with our Rule in the Text; and thence take our Estimate of God's being *with* or *against* us, as we are *with* or *against* Him, our Prospect will still darken upon us: As we shall soon perceive by the impartial Resolution of the following Queries.

1. Is the Government of God esteemed or despised by the Generality of Men? Are his Laws observed or violated? Is his holy Name, Day, and Worship sanctified or prophaned?

2. Is Vice, generally speaking, shamed or applauded? Is it punished, or indulged? Is it driven to Corners, or does it not in many places walk bare-faced?

3. Is Religion and a good Conscience, in general, ~~Repute~~ among us, or are they not many times used as Names of Reproach and Contempt?

4. Are

4. Are Modesty, Truth, Sobriety, and righteous Dealing, common Virtues among us; or are they rare things, to be wondered at, when observed?

5. Are we united or divided among our selves in Church and State? Are we ready to *succour*, or greedy to *devour* one another?

6. Are we the Promoters of Piety and Virtue in the Management of our Trade and Commerce in Foreign Countries? Are we the *Salt* or the *Poison* of the Earth? An Honour or a Scandal to our Profession?

Lastly, Are the Instruments of our Wars, generally speaking, on the side of Piety or Impiety? Does the common Language of our *Soldiers* and *Seamen* favour of Grace or of Profaneness?

Surely the true Answer to all these Questions will denounce Woe and Misery to us: such as will demand not only the solemn Observation of this Day, but the keeping of private Fasts to mourn over the publick Guilt. Let me therefore prevail with you, not to think the Duty of this Day over, when you go out of this place; but to divide the whole Day betwixt publick and private Devotion. And may the solemn and serious Humiliation of this Day be a means

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of turning the Wrath of God away from us, and of obtaining Favour in his Sight, as in the Case of penitent *Ninive* of old.

It is our Comfort and Happiness that our *Sovereign Lady the Queen* stands at the Head of Her Nation in the Devotion of this Day, and that we are convened by Her Authority on this solemn Occasion. The good God strengthen Her Hands in farther Efforts both against the Sins of Her People, and the Forces of Her Enemies. The Lord accept Her *Princely Offering* lately made for the Service of his *House*: And think upon Her for Good, according to all She has done for Her own *Realms* and for all *Europe*. May the Lord of Hosts preserve and prosper Her Majesty's Arms by Sea and Land, and make the ensuing Campaign to afford Her Majesty and Her Allies greater Matter of Triumph, than the last; though that was surprisingly great. And whilst *Her Majesty's* Forces vanquish the Power of the *Common Enemy*, may Her virtuous Example subdue his Heart, and encline him to reign with a more *sublime Grandeur* in the *Liberty* and *Welfare* of his Subjects than in their *Slavery* and *Distress*. And as Her Majesty is one of the most tender and indulgent of Princes, may Her Subjects excel all others

others in Duty and Faithfulness. And may it
please Almighty God to prolong Her Majesty's
Days to as great a Length as Mortality admits
of, in order to the subduing of the *Proud*, the
limiting of the *Ambitious*, the reducing of the *Exor-*
bitant, the succouring of the *Oppressed*, the re-
claiming of the *Vicious*, and the protecting of the
Virtuous: which God of his infinite Mercy grant,
for the sake of *Jesus Christ* our Lord. *Amen.*



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